

# FOREIGN SAINTS AT HOME IN EIGHTH- AND NINTH-CENTURY ROME: THE PATROCINIA OF *DIACONIAE*, *XENODOCHIA*, AND GREEK MONASTERIES\*

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Rome, by the 9<sup>th</sup> century, housed well over a hundred churches, oratories, monasteries and other religious establishments.<sup>1</sup> A substantial number of these intramural foundations were dedicated to “foreign” saints, that is, saints who were associated, by their liturgical commemoration, with locations outside Rome.<sup>2</sup> Many of these foundations were linked to, or promoted by Rome’s immigrant population or travelers. Early medieval Rome continued to be well connected with the wider Mediterranean world; in particular, it boasted a lively Greek-speaking population.<sup>3</sup> This paper investigates the correlation between “foreign” institutions and “foreign” cults in early medieval Rome, arguing that the cults of foreign saints served to differentiate these communities, marking them out as distinct units in Rome, while at the same time helping integrate them into Rome’s sacred topography.<sup>4</sup>

To do so, the paper first presents a brief overview of Rome’s religious institutions associated with eastern influence and foreigners. It

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\* This article is based on research conducted for my doctoral dissertation (in progress) entitled “Building Rome Saint by Saint: Sanctity from Abroad at Home in the City (6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century).”

<sup>1</sup> An overview of the existing religious foundations in Rome is provided by the so-called “Catalogue of 807,” which I discuss below. For a recent overview, see Roberto Meneghini, Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani, and Elisabetta Bianchi, *Roma nell’altomedioevo: topografia e urbanistica della città dal V al X secolo* (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e zecca dello stato, 2004) (hereafter Meneghini, Santangeli Valenzani, and Bianchi, *Roma nell’altomedioevo*).

<sup>2</sup> This definition takes its lead from the site associated with a saint’s “*dies natalis*”; accordingly, it includes legends that likely originated in Rome when they present their protagonists as martyred outside of Rome.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding travelers to Rome, see Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 211-236, ch. 8: “Easterners Heading West: Group Portrait” (hereafter McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*); for the Greek-speaking presence in early medieval Rome, see below, n. 7.

<sup>4</sup> By “foreign” institutions I refer to those types of institutions which were associated, in their origins or in their make-up, with the influence of “foreigners” in Rome, that is, immigrants, as well as other inhabitants of Rome differentiated by the sources as “other”, in particular “Greeks,” that is, Greek-speakers (who, in many cases, may have been born and raised in Rome).

then focuses on three case studies: the *diaconiae* dedicated to St George, Sts Sergius and St Bacchus, and St Boniface respectively. These demonstrate how saints' cults could reflect their communities' particularities, while also furnishing them with a past that knitted them into the wider contours of Christian history.

## I. Overview of the *patrocinia* of Rome's *diaconiae*, *xenodochia*, and Greek monasteries

A snapshot of Rome in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century is provided by the catalogue of gifts in the *Liber Pontificalis*' Life of Leo III.<sup>5</sup> This list, tallying the gifts presented by Pope Leo III to ecclesiastical institutions in Rome in 807, aims to be all-inclusive. Although not comprehensive, this is the most extensive inventory of ecclesiastical foundations to survive from before the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Thus it provides a convenient standpoint from which to survey the Roman landscape.

Included in the "Catalogue of 807" are three types of institutions associated with foreigners or foreign influence: Greek monasteries, *diaconiae*, and *xenodochia*. By no means was it the case that only these institutions were dedicated to foreign saints. Many other churches throughout the city were too. However, the overwhelming proportion of these institutions dedicated to such saints suggests that their cults played a role in defining and differentiating them.

To begin with, let us look at the so-called "Greek" monasteries (Table 1).<sup>6</sup> These were monasteries inhabited by Greek-speaking monks, whether from the eastern Mediterranean or, as was more common, from southern Italy or Sicily – or even Greek-speaking inhabitants of Rome.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> LP 98, 69-81, vol. 2, 18-25. For a discussion of this list, see Herman Geertman, *More veterum: il Liber Pontificalis e gli edifici ecclesiastici di Roma nella tarda antichità e nell'alto medioevo* (Groningen: H.D. Tjeenk Willink, 1975), 82-129 (hereafter Geertman, *More veterum*).

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Marie Sansterre, "Le Monachisme Byzantin à Rome," in *Bisanzio, Roma e l'Italia nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo (Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 1988), 702-746; idem, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne: milieu du VI<sup>ème</sup> s.-fin du IX<sup>ème</sup> s.* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1983) (hereafter Sansterre, *Moines grecs*). More generally on Rome's monasteries, see Guy Ferrari, *Early Roman Monasteries: Notes for the History of the Monasteries and Convents at Rome from the V through the X Century* (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1957) (hereafter Ferrari, *Early Roman Monasteries*).

<sup>7</sup> Regarding "Greeks" in 8<sup>th</sup>-century Rome, see Clemens Gantner, "Die Wahrnehmung von Anderen in päpstlichen Quellen des achten und neunten Jahrhunderts" (Vienna: University of Vienna, 2011), esp. 62-92, who differentiates between "Italo-Greeks" and Greeks from Asia Minor, both of which groups were, however, frequently perceived as "culturally Greek." See also Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590-752* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Cyril Mango, "La culture grecque et l'Occident au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," in

<i>Greek Monasteries in 807</i> <sup>8</sup>	<i>Site of Saint's Martyrdom</i>	<i>Type of Saint</i>
S. Agata <i>de Subura</i>	Catania	virgin
S. Anastasio <i>ad Aquam Salviam</i>	Resafa (in Iraq)	soldier
S. Andrea <i>in Clivo Scauri</i>	Patras	apostle
S. Erasmo	Formia (Campania)	traveler
<i>Monasterium Renati</i> (with oratory for Sta. Lucia) <sup>9</sup>	Syracuse	virgin (healer)
S. Saba	Palestine	monk
S. Silvestro	Rome	pope (healer)
<i>Greek Convents in 807</i>		
S. Gregorio <i>in Campo Martis</i> <sup>10</sup>	confessor, died outside of Nazianzus	bishop

Table 1. Greek Monasteries/Convents of Rome in 807

As the work of Sansterre has shown, there was no particular federation of Greek-speaking monks in Rome; instead, these monasteries differed on a practical level and were recognized as distinctive. Included in the "Catalogue of 807" are approximately seven Greek monasteries, as well as, it seems, one convent, dedicated to Gregory of Nazianzus. Of these, all but one (S. Silvestro) were dedicated to foreign saints.

Turning next to the *diaconiae* and *xenodochia*, we find a similar correlation. The early history of Rome's *diaconiae* is shrouded in mystery: what is clear is that these were charitable institutions, at least in part associated with Rome's Greek-speaking community, which nourished and assisted the poor and travelers.<sup>11</sup> *Diaconiae* first developed in the eastern

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*I problemi dell'Occidente nel secolo VIII*, Settimane di Studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 20 (Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 1973), 693-721; McCormick, *Origins of the European economy*, 211-236; Michael McCormick, "The Imperial Edge: Italo-Byzantine Identity, Movement and Integration, A.D. 650-950," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. Ahrweiler and A. Laiou (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997), 7-52.

<sup>8</sup> This list is based on Geertman's interpretation of the "Catalogue of 807": Geertman, *More veterum*, 115-119 and 26-27; see also Sansterre, *Moines grecs*, 32-37.

<sup>9</sup> Although it is included with what are otherwise the Latin monasteries in the "Catalogue of 807," all other evidence points to the *monasterium Renati* being a 'Greek-speaking' monastery at this time, so I follow Sansterre in including it.

<sup>10</sup> Although the "Catalogue of 807" does not specify to which Gregory the oratory was dedicated, later tradition has it that the convent was founded by refugees who brought with them the relics of Gregory of Nazianzus.

<sup>11</sup> A general overview is provided in *Monasteri e diaconie tra l'età tardoantica e l'alto Medioevo: Roma Archeologica. Guida alle antichità della città eterna* (Naples: Elio de Rosa editore, 2005).

Mediterranean and spread to Rome by way of Constantinople and/or southern Italy, probably sometime in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> Although in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries Rome's *diaconiae* increasingly came under papal supervision, they remained a distinctive institution.

In the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, there were, according to the "Catalogue of 807," twenty-three *diaconiae* in the city (Table 2). Of these, the greatest proportion (seven) was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, whose expanding cult in Rome was likely the result of Byzantine influence.<sup>13</sup> Of the remaining sixteen, all but three were dedicated to foreign saints. These exceptions are S. Silvestro, the unusual S. Angelo in Pescheria, dedicated to the Archangel Michael, and S. Eustachio.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the *passio* of

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The foundational work on Rome's *diaconiae* remains Ottorino Bertolini, "Per la storia delle diaconie romane nell'alto medio evo sino alla fine del secolo VIII," *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 70 (1947): 1-145. His work follows on that of Louis Duchesne, "Notes sur la topographie de Rome au moyen-âge – II. Les titres presbytéraux et les diaconies," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* 7 (1887): 236-243; and J. Lestocquoy, "Administration de Rome et Diaconies du VIIe au IXe siècle," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 7 (1930): 261-298. A helpful overview of the scholarship on *diaconiae* is provided by Raimund Hermes, "Die stadtrömischen Diakonien," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 91 (1996): 1-120. But Jean Durlat, *De la ville antique à la ville byzantine: le problème des substances* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1990) and, following him, Ugo Falesiedi, *Le diaconie: i servizi assistenziali nella Chiesa antica* (Rome: Istituto patristico Augustinianum, 1995), disagree with some of Hermes' conclusions. For more recent archeological work, see Meneghini, Santangeli Valenzani, and Bianchi, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, 75-91. Also relevant are the discussions of Frances J. Niederer, "Early Medieval Charity," *Church History* 21/4 (1952): 285-295; Ferrari, *Early Roman Monasteries*, 355-75; Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 74-78, 81-82, 109; Sansterre, *Moines grecs*, 101-106 and 108-111; Alessandra Milella, "Le diaconie romane tra il VI e l'VIII secolo," in *Cultura e promozione umana: la cura del corpo e dello spirito dai primi secoli cristiani al Medioevo. Convegno internazionale di studi, Oasi Maria Santissima di Troina, 29 ottobre-1 novembre 1999*, ed. E. Dal Covolo and I. Giannetto (Troina (Enna): Oasi Editrice, 2000); Anna Maria Giuntella, "Gli spazi dell'assistenza e della meditazione," in *Roma nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 48 (Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 2001), 639-691.

<sup>12</sup> The eastern origins of *diaconiae* were first demonstrated by Henri-Irénée Marrou, "L'origine orientale des diaconies romaines," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 57 (1940): 95-142, esp. 110-115, although his conclusions have been substantially revised by Thomas Sternberg, "Der vermeintliche Ursprung der westlichen Diakonien in Ägypten und die Conlationes des Johannes Cassian," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 31 (1988): 173-209.

<sup>13</sup> For the close association of Mary with Constantinople, see Cyril Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokoupolis," in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Geneva: Skira, 2000), 17-25; Averil Cameron, "The Theotokos in Sixth-century Constantinople: A City Finds Its Symbol," *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978): 79-108; Françoise Jeanlin, "Konstantinopel, die Stadt der Theotokos," in *Maria, Abbild oder Vorbild?: Zur Sozialgeschichte mittelalterlicher Marienverehrung*, ed. H. Röckelein et al. (Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> One should note the double dedication (not otherwise attested) of SS. Silvestro e Martino.

Eustachius, a Roman general under Trajan martyred in Rome, is a translation from the Greek, again suggesting eastern influence.<sup>15</sup>

<b>Diaconiae in 807<sup>16</sup></b>	<b><i>Site of Saint's Martyrdom</i></b>	<b><i>Type of Saint</i></b>
S. Adriano	Nicomedia	solider-official
S. Agata	Catania	virgin
S. Angelo <i>in Foro Piscium</i>		
S. Bonifacio	Tarsus	traveler
SS. Cosma e Damiano	Aegea in Cilicia	healers
S. Eustachio	Rome	soldier/traveler
S. Giorgio <i>ad Velum Aureum</i>	Lydda (Diospolis)	soldier (healer)
S. Lucia <i>in Orphea</i>	Syracuse	virgin (healer)
S. Lucia <i>in Septem Vias</i>	Syracuse	virgin (healer)
S. Maria Antiqua		
S. Maria <i>in Aquiro</i>		
S. Maria <i>in Caput Portici</i>		
S. Maria <i>in Cosmedin</i>		
S. Maria <i>in Domnica</i>		
S. Maria <i>in Hadriano</i>		
S. Maria <i>in via Lata</i>		
S. Martino	confessor, Candes (Gaul)	bishop (healer)
SS. Nereo ed Achilleo	Terracina	officials
SS. Sergio e Baccho	Resafa (in Syria)	soldiers
S. Silvestro	Rome	pope (healer)
SS. Silvestro e Martino <sup>17</sup>	confessor, Candes (Gaul)	bishop (healer)
S. Teodoro	Euchaita	soldier
S. Vito	Lucania (southern Italy)	noble (healer)

**Table 2.** *Diaconiae* of Rome in 807

<sup>15</sup> Hippolyte Delehaye, "La légende de Saint Eustache," *Bulletins de la classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques de l'Académie royale de Belgique* 4 (1919): 175-210; see also Angelo Monteverdi, *I testi della leggenda di S. Eustachio* (Bergamo, 1910).

<sup>16</sup> The precise number of *diaconiae* in Rome at any time is difficult to estimate; again I follow Geertman, *More veterum*, 111-15.

<sup>17</sup> The "Catalogue of 807" records this *diaconia* as dedicated to both Martin and Sylvester; in other sources these are recorded as two distinct dedications located near to each other (neither of which is described as a *diaconia*): Geertman, *More veterum*, 113.

The *xenodochia* played a role similar to that of the *diaconiae*, although possibly they were primarily catering to travelers. They too were overwhelmingly dedicated to foreign saints (Table 3).<sup>18</sup> Of the four *xenodochia* known to have existed at the turn of the century, one was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and three were dedicated to foreign saints. There was also a *hospitale*, yet another similar form of charitable institution, dedicated to St Peregrinus.

Xenodochia in 807	Site of Saint's Martyrdom	Type of Saint
oratorium sanctae Dei genetricis qui ponitur in senodochio Firmis		
oratorium sanctorum Cosmae et Damiani qui ponitur in xenodochium qui appellatur Tucium	Aegea in Cilicia	healers
oratorium sancti abba Cyri qui ponitur in xenodochium qui appellatur a Valeris	Alexandria	healer
oratorium sanctae Luciae in xenodochium qui appellatur Anichiorum	Syracuse	virgin (healer)
oratorium sancti Peregrini qui ponitur in hospitale dominico ad Naumachiam	Auxerre	missionary

Table 3. *Xenodochia* of Rome in 807

All together, the dedications reveal a wide geographical spread with a few areas of high concentration (Tables 1-3). Of a total of twenty different saints (excluding Mary and the Archangel), about a quarter were associated with locations in Italy or Sicily other than Rome. Furthermore, two of these Sicilian saints (St Agatha and St Lucy) had multiple institutions dedicated to them. More than half were from the eastern Mediterranean or further east.

In a few instances, particularly with regard to the monasteries, there is some evidence to suggest that these communities venerated saints

<sup>18</sup> Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani, "Pellegrini, senatori e papi. Gli xenodochia a Roma tra il V e il IX secolo," *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 19-20 (1996-1997): 203-226; Francesca Romana Stasolla, "A proposito delle strutture assistenziali ecclesiastiche: gli xenodochi," *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 121 (1998): 5-45. See also the works cited above, in n. 11. For a skeptical approach regarding the differences between *diaconiae* and *xenodochia*, see Hendrik W. Dey, "Diaconiae, xenodochia, hospitalia and Monasteries: 'Social Security' and the Meaning of Monasticism in Early Medieval Rome," *Early Medieval Europe* 16/4 (2008): 398-422.

from their homelands. Monks from the Jerusalem area, bringing with them the head of Anastasius the Persian, likely arrived in Rome in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century and established themselves at the Cilician monastery *ad Aquam Salviam*; as a result, the monastery, which had previously been referred to by various names, came to be known as “S. Anastasius ad Aquas Salvias.”<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, by the later 7<sup>th</sup> century, a community of Sabaite monks from the original monastery of St Sabas outside Jerusalem, or perhaps from the Sabaite community in North Africa, had established the monastery of S. Saba.<sup>20</sup> Apart from these examples, however, there is little evidence supporting such correlations and indeed, they often seem farfetched.

Whereas a saint’s cult did not necessarily reveal the origins of its community, it could otherwise reflect that community’s identity, embodying its fears, aspirations, and ideals. This is suggested by the types of saints to which these institutions are dedicated (Table 1-3). If we categorize the saints very schematically, we find that a total of seven saints (or pairs of saints) are soldiers or officials, both types corresponding well with the Byzantine administrative presence in Rome. Three saints’ lives include extensive travels, which could have resonated with immigrants who had come from abroad.

Most striking is the number of dedications to physician saints, such as Cosmas and Damian, or saints whose lives are otherwise characterized by prominent healing miracles. There are a total of thirteen such dedications, to seven different thaumaturgical saints (or pairs of saints), all except two of which are either *diaconiae* or *xenodochia*, institutions dedicated to healing. Here were saints who buttressed the goals of their communities and assisted them in their tasks.

To examine how this process worked, let us consider some examples. Here I focus on three *diaconiae* whose dedications correspond to the three most prevalent types of saints: the healing (and soldier saint) George, the soldier saints Sergius and Bacchus, and a travelling saint, Boniface. These saints, with their Latin *passiones*, all translated from the Greek, furnished their communities with a past that at once affirmed their distinctiveness, while simultaneously incorporating them into the broader contours of Roman and Christian history, integrating them into Rome.

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<sup>19</sup> Carmela Virillo Franklin, *The Latin Dossier of Anastasius the Persian: Hagiographic Translations and Transformations* (Toronto, Ont.: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Robert Coates-Stephens, “San Saba and the *Xenodochium de Via Nova*,” *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 83 (2007): 223-256; Sansterre, *Moines grecs*, 22-30.

## II. A healing saint for Rome's "Greek quarter": S. Giorgio al Velabro

Located on the left bank of the Tiber, in Rome's so-called "Greek quarter," was S. Giorgio al Velabro (*ad Velum Aureum*). This *diaconia* is first mentioned in the written sources only in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, when Pope Zacharias miraculously discovered the head of St George and had it transported to the *diaconia*.<sup>21</sup> The church, however, certainly predated this papal intervention. Archeological evidence indicates that it was once a multi-roomed structure, a fairly modest building suited to its function as a *diaconia*.<sup>22</sup>

The district in which S. Giorgio was located, near the Tiber port, was characterized by its Greek-speaking population.<sup>23</sup> This community was likely associated to some degree with the Byzantine administrative presence in Rome, based on the nearby Palatine hill.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Greek inscriptions from S. Giorgio attest to its Greek community in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup>

St George was a saint ideally suited for this community, which we may imagine as a diverse group of current or erstwhile Byzantine functionaries who had chosen to devote themselves to Christian charity. St George's cult was centered around Lydda (Diospolis) in Palestine, but he was popular throughout the Mediterranean world, especially in the Byzantine sphere of influence.<sup>26</sup> His *passio*, of which there are many variants, describes George as a Cappadocian who had attained a prestigious

<sup>21</sup> LP, Life of Zacharias, 93.24, p. 434, lines 7-13.

<sup>22</sup> The most detailed overview of the church remains that of Richard Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae: The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV - IX Cent.)*, 5 vol. (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1937-1977), vol. 1, 242-263. An in-depth archeological analysis of the building has been hindered by the thick layer of plaster that was used to restore the church in 1924/25. However, recent archeological analysis of the church, undertaken after the nearby bomb explosion in 1993 that severely damaged the church, seems to confirm Krautheimer's conclusions: Maria Grazia Turco, "The Church of St. George in Velabrum in Rome: Techniques of Construction, Materials and Historical Transformations," in *Proceedings of the First International Congress on Construction History, Madrid, 20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> January 2003*, ed. S. Huerta (Madrid: Instituto Juan de Herrera, 2003), 2001-2012. Also see A. Giannettini and C. Venanzi, *S. Giorgio al Velabro* (Rome: Marietti, 1967).

<sup>23</sup> Evidence for the "Greek" quarter comes especially from the many *diaconiae* in the area: Sta. Maria in Cosmedin, S. Teodoro and farther afield, Sta. Maria Antiqua. By the late 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> century at the latest, the district housed a *schola Grecorum*.

<sup>24</sup> Andrea Augenti, *Il Palatino nel Medioevo: archeologia e topografia (secoli VI - XIII)* (Rome: Erma di Bretschneider, 1996), 17-60 (ch. 2-3).

<sup>25</sup> Pierre Batiffol, "Inscriptions byzantines de Saint-Georges au Vélabre," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 7 (1887): 419-431.

<sup>26</sup> Dante Balboni, "Giorgio, santo martire," BS, vol. 6: 511-525.



position in the military.<sup>27</sup> When he heard of imperials plans to persecute Christians, George decided to give away all his goods to the poor and proclaim his Christian faith – precisely the path of imitating Christ to which the *diaconia*'s members must have aspired. George undergoes countless tortures, but throughout his agonies he remains a model of patience and fortitude. Moreover, he performs a wide range of miracles, many of which correspond to the ambitions of a *diaconia*: confronted with a poor widow, St George prays and food is brought by an angel; he cures the sick and, in some versions, he even resurrects the dead.<sup>28</sup>

While early versions ascribe George's martyrdom to the Persian king Datianus, later versions, including a type which has been hypothesized to have originated in Rome, assign his martyrdom to a Roman emperor, either Decius or Diocletian.<sup>29</sup> St George remains a Cappadocian martyred far from Rome, but this shift integrates George into Rome's imperial history, the legacy of which lingered throughout the city.

Next to S. Giorgio was the "Arch of Janus," now bare, but which may once have celebrated one of Rome's earliest Christian emperors, Constantine or Constantius II (Fig. 1).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Originally written in Greek (with many variants), there are about twenty different Latin versions included in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* (BHL 3363-3383), not to mention numerous other versions in Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian and Arabic. The foundational work regarding the development of the legend remains Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1909), 45-76. Particularly helpful in charting out the different Latin versions and their relationships are John E. Matzke, "Contributions to the History of the Legend of Saint George, with Special Reference to the Sources of the French, German and Anglo-Saxon Metrical Versions," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 17/4 (1902): 464-535; and Wolfgang Haubrichs, *Georgslied und Georgslegende im frühen Mittelalter: Text und Rekonstruktion* (Königstein/Ts.: Scriptor, 1979), 205-305 (hereafter Haubrichs, *Georgslied und Georgslegende*). My interpretation follows Haubrich's conclusions.

<sup>28</sup> The complexity of the manuscript tradition cannot be sufficiently stressed; many recensions shorten the text and remove some of its most fantastical scenes.

<sup>29</sup> According to Haubrichs, type Y (BHL 3369-71; 3378-82; 3383b; 3384-5; 3393) was likely originally translated from Greek into Latin in Rome, as versions thereof are found in passionaries based on Roman models. There are two primary types, Y<sup>1</sup>, longer and with more miraculous elements, found in the Aquileia-Bavaria region and in Aquitania, and Y<sup>2</sup>, a shortened version found throughout Francia. It is hypothesized that Y<sup>2</sup> dates from the late 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century and subsequently travelled north, the older version Y<sup>1</sup> thus surviving only in those regions where it had circulated before the creation of this new version. The Y-version is edited by Haubrichs, *Georgslied und Georgslegende*, 474-499 (Appendix 2).

<sup>30</sup> Filippo Coarelli, "Ianus Quadrifons," in *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, ed. Eva Margareta Steinby, 6 vol. (Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 1993-2000), vol. 3, 94 (hereafter LTUR); D. Palombi, "Arcus Divi Constantini," LTUR I: 91. The "Arch of Janus" is generally considered to correspond to the *arcus divi Constantini* only known from its mention in the regional catalogues (after the indication *Velabrum*).



Fig. 1. “Arch of Janus” (Photo by Author)

Meanwhile, attached to the church was the *Arcus Argentariorum* dedicated in honor of Septimius Severus and Caracalla. It depicted members of the imperial family engaged in sacrifice, as well as soldiers and their barbarian prisoners (Fig. 2-3).<sup>31</sup>

To those who could read its inscription, this arch juxtaposed the failures of Rome’s pagan cult with eternal salvation, as well as earthly charity, which the eastern soldier George enabled the adjacent *diaconia* to provide. To the less well informed, the reliefs could be read as scenes from the life of George, such as his refusal to sacrifice or his competition with a magician who divided a bull, each half coming back to life whole. Thus the cult of St George provided its community with a source of identification that offered miraculous healing and bespoke the far-flung reaches of Christianity’s power, while also integrating its community into Rome’s Christian history.

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<sup>31</sup> Sylvia Diebner, “Arcus Septimii Severi (Forum Boarium); Arcus Argentariorum; Monumentum Argentariorum,” LTUR I: 105-106.



Fig. 2. *Arcus Argentariorum*: Inside Panel (attached to church)  
(Photo by Author)



Fig. 3. *Arcus Argentariorum*: Outside Panel (facing away from church)  
(Photo by Author)

### III. Soldier saints for the *forum Romanum*: SS. Sergio e Baccho

Like St George, the pair of saints who form my second example, Sergius and Bacchus, are again soldier saints. Whereas the legends about St George stress his miraculous powers, the cult of Sergius and Bacchus foregrounded their military identity; the pair was celebrated as triumphal representatives of Christianity's geographic reach.

At the west end of the *forum Romanum* was a *diaconia* dedicated to Sergius and Bacchus, saints closely associated with Resafa/Sergiopolis, where they were said to be buried.<sup>32</sup> The origins of this *diaconia* are unclear.<sup>33</sup> Archeologically nothing remains of the site. As with S. Giorgio

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> Mara Bonfioli, "La diaconia dei SS. Sergio e Baccho nel Foro Romano. Fonti e problemi," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 50 (1974): 55-85.

al Velabro, it is first attested in written sources only when it was the recipient of papal beneficence; in the later 8<sup>th</sup> century, it was restored by Pope Hadrian.<sup>34</sup> Again this silence suggests that it had previously been a more independent foundation, likely supported by Rome's Greek-speaking community.<sup>35</sup>

The *diaconia* was located in Rome's traditional religious and political core, at a key junction of the *Via Sacra*, once the triumphal path of Roman emperors. It was also right next to the *umbilicus Romae*, a complicated tangle of poorly understood monuments, which had visually represented the center of Rome and Rome's centrality in the world.<sup>36</sup> Thus the *diaconia* of Sergius and Bacchus represented a pivotal intervention in Rome's sacred topography. Their cult offered a commentary on the Christianization of Rome and the imperial connotations of Christianity.

According to their *passio*, Sergius and Bacchus were eastern soldiers who had found particular favor with Emperor Maximian, but as devoted Christians preferred to die for their faith.<sup>37</sup> Although martyred in Syria, much of their legend mapped neatly onto the historical topography of the *forum*. In the *passio*, the initial location of their accusation is unspecified; it is described how the saints refused to sacrifice at the temple of Jupiter ("*ad sacrarium magni Jovis*")<sup>38</sup> – in Rome the ruins of Jupiter's temple remained visible and recognized as such throughout the Middle

<sup>34</sup> LP 97.90, vol. 1: 512, lines 20–23.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Coates-Stephens, "The Forum Romanum in the Byzantine Period," in *Marmoribus vestita: miscellanea in onore di Federico Guiobaldi*, ed. Olof Brandt and Philippe Pergola (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2011): 385–408, esp. 161–163; more generally, see also Robert Coates-Stephens, "Byzantine Building Patronage in Post-reconquest Rome," in *Les cités de l'Italie tardo-antique, IV–VI siècle: institutions, économie, société, culture et religion*, ed. C.J.G. Massimiliano Ghilardi and Pierfrancesco Porena (Rome: École française de Rome, 2006): 149–166.

<sup>36</sup> The early 9<sup>th</sup>-century *Einsiedeln Itinerary* positions "S. Sergii," "*ubi est umbilicus Romae*," across from the column and forum of Trajan: Franz Alto Bauer, "Das Bild der Stadt Rom in karolingischer Zeit: Der Anonymus Einsidlensis," *Römische Quartal Schrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 92 (1997): 190–228. The site comprised, throughout the centuries, a complex of monuments (*mundus/milliarium aureum/umbilicus*) whose origins and significance is difficult to disentangle: F. Coarelli, "Umbilicus Romae," *LTUR* V: 95–6; Z. Mari, "Milliarium Aureum," *LTUR* III: 250–1.

<sup>37</sup> The oldest Latin version of the *passio* of Sergius and Bacchus (BHL 7599ff; edited in AASS Oct. III, 863–870), which is likely Roman in origin, is a translation of the Greek *passio* (BHG 1624; ed. I. van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi Graece nunc primum edita," *Analecta Bollandiana* 14 (1895): 373–395. The evidence for the Roman origins of BHL 7599 is that this version is included in the Weißenburger Legendar, Brussels Royal Library of Belgium 7984; relics of Sergius and Bacchus were translated from Rome to Weißenburg in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and it is likely that their *passio* accompanied them.

<sup>38</sup> *Acta*, 4: AASS Oct. III, 864A.

Ages on the Capitoline, above the church of Sergius and Bacchus.<sup>39</sup> Enraged, the emperor had them dressed in women's garb and dragged "*per medium forum*" to the imperial *palatium*, a description easily imaginable in the Roman *forum* where the imperial palaces were located on the Palatine across the *forum* from the Capitoline. Chanting, "For though we should walk in the midst of the shadow of death we will fear no evils, for you are with us," Sergius and Bacchus' "procession" took on special significance as an inversion, as it were, of the imperial triumphal processions for which the *Via Sacra* was famed<sup>40</sup> – illustrations of which could even be seen on the Arch of Septimius Severus adjacent to the church, below the panels depicting imperial campaigns.<sup>41</sup>

Positioned at the end of the *Via Sacra*, the church of Sergius and Bacchus occupied the spot where Christian emperors concluded their triumphal processions, desisting from the final ascent up to the Capitoline to sacrifice at the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.<sup>42</sup> Thus the cult of Sergius and Bacchus in Rome confidently asserted that eastern soldiers were an integral part of the Christian triumph over pagan traditions, a message that could have appealed to members of the Byzantine administration in Rome.

The cult of Sergius and Bacchus came to Rome with an additional imperial pedigree. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, in Constantinople's palace of Hormisdas, Emperor Justinian had two churches built, closely linked architecturally and ideologically: one dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul, saints from the western end of the Empire, the other to Sts Sergius and Bacchus from far east.<sup>43</sup> In tandem, the two churches presented a vision of

<sup>39</sup> Stefano De Angeli, "Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, Aedes (Fasi Tardo-Rep. e Imp.)," LTUR III: 148-153, here 153.

<sup>40</sup> *Acta*, 7: AASS Oct. III, 864E: "*Cumque Sancti Dei traberentur per medium forum, cantantes simul dicebant: Si ambulaverimus in medio umbræ mortis, non timebimus mala, quoniam tu nobiscum es*"; modified from Psalms 22:4 (my translation follows that of the King James Bible). Regarding the Roman triumph, see Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>41</sup> Richard Brilliant, "Arcus: Septimius Severus (Forum)," LTUR I: 103-105.

<sup>42</sup> Whether Constantine ascended the Capitoline is much debated; certainly Constantius II in his visit to Rome in 357 did not: cf. Augusto Frascchetti, *La conversione: da Roma pagana a Roma cristiana* (Rome: Laterza, 1999), 252-258, for the rare imperial visits to Rome in the period from Constantius II through Theodoric.

<sup>43</sup> Procopius, *Buildings*, I. 4.1-9, ed. and transl. into English by H. B. Dewing, *Procopius, On Buildings. General Index*, Loeb Classical Library (1940), 43-49. Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin. Première partie, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique. Tome III, Les églises et les monastères* (Paris: l'Institut français d'études byzantines, 1969), 466-470; Wolfgang Müller-Wiener et al., *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls:*

an extensive, but interconnected and unified Empire. These ecumenical aspirations, in turn, were propagated in Rome by the *diaconia* of Sergius and Bacchus at the foot of the Capitoline hill.

#### IV. Travelling redemption on the Aventine: S. Bonifacio

Like the two previous examples, the *diaconia* of St Boniface of Tarsus is first securely mentioned in written sources from the late 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup> Although a church dedicated to Boniface (and Alexius) remains in situ on the Aventine, its eventful monastic history has completely transformed the site.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the triumphal dedications to Sergius and Bacchus, or George, situated in the midst of Rome's crumbling imperial splendor, S. Bonifacio was located in much more tranquil surroundings: high up on the Aventine, amidst aristocratic villas and gardens.<sup>46</sup> As suited its setting and its more reclusive community, the cult of St Boniface emphasized the potential of personal salvation available even for the rich and sinful. More pointedly than the cults of Sergius and Bacchus, that of Boniface also drew attention to how Rome had benefitted from the wider Christian world, promoting a pointed message of acceptance towards immigrants and travelers.

Although the *passio* of Boniface, like those of Sergius and Bacchus, and George, is a translation from Greek, it is based in Rome under the reign of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian, and features Romans from Rome.<sup>47</sup> The protagonists of the legend are an exceedingly wealthy Roman

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*Byzantion-Konstantinopolis-Istanbul bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: E. Wasmuth, 1977), 177-183.

<sup>44</sup> The church is included among the *Istae vero ecclesiae intus Romae habentur*, a late 8<sup>th</sup>-century catalogue of Rome's key churches. It is also listed in the itinerary first found in William of Malmesbury's 12<sup>th</sup>-century *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, but whose model arguably dates from as early as the later 7<sup>th</sup> century: see n. 52. It was also the recipient of gifts by Pope Leo III: LP 98 (Life of Leo III): 29, ed. Duchesne, II: 9, line 8; 75, 21, line 16.

<sup>45</sup> The most recent and up-to-date study of the complex throughout the ages is Oliva Muratore, Maria Richiello, and Paolo Barbato, *La storia e il restauro del complesso conventuale dei Santi Bonifacio e Alessio all'Aventino* (Rome: E. de Rosa, 2004), although its information on the earliest period is scanty and must be treated with caution. For a more judicious assessment, see Silvana Episcopo, "S. Bonifacius, Basilica," *LTUR* I: 201-202.

<sup>46</sup> *Il Celio. Il Aventino e dintorni: Roma Archeologica. Guida alle antichità della città eterna* 6 (Naples: Elio de Rosa editore, 1999); Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani, "Aventino," in Meneghini, Santangeli Valenzani, and Bianchi, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, 145.

<sup>47</sup> Pio Franchi De'Cavalieri convincingly demonstrated that the *passio* of Boniface was originally written in Greek (and subsequently translated into Latin) and displays similarities with other Byzantine hagiographical texts: Pio Franchi De'Cavalieri, "Dove fu scritta la leggenda di S. Bonifazio?," *Nuovo bollettino di Archeologia; Cristiana* 6 (1900): 205-234. For the Greek text, see Thierry Ruinart and Henry Dodwell, *Acta primorum martyrum sincera & selecta*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Amsterdam: Ex officina Wetsteniana, 1713), 284-291 (hereafter Ruinart, ed., *Acta*); the Metaphrastic version (BHG 281) is printed in the PG 115: 241-258. The Latin text is printed in AASS Maii III, 279A-284A. Louis Duchesne, "Notes sur la

noble woman, Aglaes, who has seventy-three stewards to look after her property, and her head steward, Boniface, with whom she has had an ongoing adulterous affair. The *passio* describes Boniface as “a drunkard and an adulterer and a lover of the things [Latin: sins] which the Lord God hates.”<sup>48</sup> Yet Boniface has three redeeming qualities – characteristics that correspond to the responsibilities of a *diaconia* – namely hospitality, liberality, and compassion. The *passio* describes, “If ever he saw a foreigner or a traveler, he would immediately and eagerly urge him to be his guest and he would minister (δικόνει/*ministrabat*) to him. During the night he would wander the roads and byways [Latin: of the city] and give out necessities to the needy.”<sup>49</sup> These qualities assure Boniface his salvation – and even a glorious martyrdom. Aglaes, too, despite her adulterous past, eventually gives away all her property and devotes herself to Christ, earning so much grace from God that she is able to expel demons and cure illnesses.<sup>50</sup> Thus the legend celebrates the salvific power of charitable works, which overcome personal moral failings.

The legend of Boniface, has, however, another thrust as a wholehearted endorsement of the power of relics as moveable sanctity, arguing that Romans have much to gain from the geographic expanse of Christianity. Fearing the consequences of their sins, Aglaes implores Boniface to travel to the East where she has heard that persecutions are taking place, and to bring back relics in order to save them: “Go therefore to those regions and bring relics [Latin adds: that is, the bodies] of holy martyrs, to us, so that in some way [Latin adds: serving and] attending to them and even building homes worthy of their passions [Latin: them], we should be saved through them [Latin: through their sacred passions] –

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topographie de Rome au moyen-âge,” *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire* 10 (1890): 225-250 argued, based on the style of the Latin *passio* of Boniface (“trop correct pour le septième ou le huitième siècle”) that it could not date from before the 9<sup>th</sup> century. As the *diaconia* may have initially had only a Greek version of the *passio*, I cite both, very similar, versions throughout.

<sup>48</sup> “ἦν δὲ οὗτος μεθυστής, καὶ πόρνος, καὶ πάντων φίλος ὧν μισεῖ κύριος ὁ Θεός,” 1, Ruinart, ed., *Acta*, p. 284; “*Erat autem hic ebriosus & adulter, & amicus peccatorum, quæ odit Dominus Deus*,” 2, AASS Maii III, 281A.

<sup>49</sup> “τρία δὲ εἶχε κατορθώματα, φιλόξενος ἦν, καὶ εὐμετάδοτος, καὶ ἐλέημων, εἰ ποτε γὰρ ἶδεν [edition; εἶδεν is meant] ξένον, ἢ ὁδοιπόρον, μετὰ πάσης σπουδῆς καὶ προθυμίας προτρέπόμενος δικόνει αὐτῷ, καὶ νυκτὸς περιάγων τὰς πλατείας καὶ ῥύμας, διεδίδου τοῖς δεομένοις τὰ πρὸς τὴν χρείαν,” 1, Ruinart, ed., *Acta*, p. 284; “*tria autem habebat rectitudinis opera, hospitalitatem scilicet, largitatem, & misericordiam. Qui si aliquando videret peregrinum aut de itinere venientem, cum omni festinatione & alacritate adhortans in hospitium suum introire, ministrabat ei. Noctibus autem circuibat plateas & vicos civitatis, tribuens pauperibus omnia quæ necessaria errant*,” 2, AASS Maii III, 281A.

<sup>50</sup> 17, Ruinart, ed., *Acta*, p. 291; 13, AASS Maii III, 283D.



both us and many others.”<sup>51</sup> The eastern Mediterranean is extolled for its profusion of martyrs and relics; through these, Romans may be saved. Boniface complies and travels to Tarsus, where he encounters suffering martyrs and is himself martyred. His servants bring back his relics to Rome, where Agleas, notified of his martyrdom in a dream, builds a sanctuary for them and dedicates herself to honoring them. This corresponds with the claim, as reported in Roman itineraries, that S. Bonifacio housed the body of its patron saint.<sup>52</sup> Through the cult of Boniface, Romans could now benefit from the empire-wide circulation of relics.

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As these three examples have shown, the cults of foreign saints carved out distinct profiles for these different communities as localized manifestations of the “universalizing” claims of Christianity. Over time, of course, their communities were integrated into Rome; eventually *diaconiae* were to be staffed and even established by Romans.<sup>53</sup> We may also imagine that their saints lost their foreignness as their cults became familiar presences in the city – while nonetheless continuing to perpetuate for their communities unique identities that defined and distinguished them.

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<sup>51</sup> “πορευθεὶς οὖν φέρε ἡμῖν λείψανα ἁγίων μαρτύρων, εἴ πως ἐξυπηρετησάμενοι τούτοις, καὶ εὐκτηρίους οἴκους οἰκοδομήσαντες ἀξίως τῆς ἀθλήσεως αὐτῶν, σωθῶμεν δι’ αὐτῶν, καὶ ἡμεῖς καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί.” 2, Ruinart, ed., *Acta*, p. 285; “*Perge igitur ad illas partes, & affer nobis reliquias, id est corpora sanctorum Martyrum, si quomodo servientes atque ministrantes eis, nec non & oratorias domos aedificantes eis dignas, per sanctas passiones eorum salvemur, tam nos quam & alii multi,*” 3, AASS Maii III, 281B.

<sup>52</sup> *Istae verae ecclesiae*, ed. Roberto Valentini and Giuseppe Zucchetti in *Codice topografico della città di Roma II*, Fonti per la storia d'Italia 88 (Roma: Tipografia del Senato, 1942), 118-31, here p. 130, line 2: “*Basilica Sancti Bonifaci martyris, ubi ipse dormit*”; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, in Valentini, ed., *Codice topografico*: 138-153; here p. 152, line 9-153, line 1: “*In monte Aventino sanctus Bonifacius et in monte Nola sancta Tatiana pausant.*”

<sup>53</sup> By the later 11<sup>th</sup> century, they had lost all trace of their earlier charitable functions, becoming *cardinali diaconi*; see Tommaso Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Il clero di Roma nel Medioevo: istituzioni e politica cittadina (secoli VIII-XIII)* (Rome: Viella, 2002), 128-135.